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ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION

Report of the Second Committee (Part VI)*

Rapporteur: Mr. Basheer F. ZOUBI (Jordan)

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Second Committee held a substantive debate on agenda item 96, sub-item (f) (see A/50/618, para. 3). Action on sub-item (f) was taken at the 39th, 41st and 42nd meetings, on 27 November and 5 and 8 December 1995. An account of the Committee's consideration of the item is contained in the relevant summary records (A/C.2/50/SR.39, 41 and 42).

II. CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSALS

A. Draft resolution contained in document A/C.2/50/L.5

2. At its 41st meeting, on 5 December, the Committee had before it a draft resolution entitled "International decade for natural disaster reduction" (see A/C.2/50/L.5), recommended by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1995/47 B of 27 July 1995 to the General Assembly for adoption.

3. At the same meeting, the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Conor Murphy (Ireland), informed the Committee of the results of the informal consultations held on the draft resolution.

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* The report of the Committee on this agenda item will be issued in several parts, under the symbol A/50/618 and addenda.

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4. Also at the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.2/50/L.5 (see para. 11, draft resolution A).

B. Draft resolutions A/C.2/50/L.35 and L.71

5. At the 39th meeting, on 27 November, the representative of Germany, on behalf of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Marshall Islands, Monaco, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, introduced a draft resolution entitled "International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction" (A/C.2/50/L.35), which read:

"The General Assembly,

"Recalling its resolutions 44/236 of 22 December 1989, 46/182 of 19 December 1991, 49/22 A of 2 December 1994 and 49/22 B of 20 December 1994,

"Having considered the Economic and Social Council resolutions 1995/47 A and 1995/47 B of 27 July 1995,

"Concerned about the continuing threat posed by natural disasters and similar disasters with an adverse impact on the environment, on vulnerable communities and national economies, particularly in developing countries,

"Reaffirming the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness, and Mitigation, adopted by the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, on 27 May 1994, 1/

"Emphasizing that early warnings of impending natural disasters and similar disasters with an adverse impact on the environment, linked to effective disaster preparedness measures and their effective dissemination, using telecommunications, including broadcast services, are key factors to successful disaster prevention and preparedness,

"1. Notes with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General on early-warning capacities of the United Nations system with regard to natural disasters and similar disasters with an adverse impact on the environment; 2/

"2. Commends the constructive inter-agency approach applied by the secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, as part of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, and all concerned agencies and organizations of the United

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1/ See A/CONF.172/9, chap. I, annex I.

2/ A/50/526.

Nations system, which has led to this initial overview and analysis of early-warning concepts, capacities and gaps and to proposals for improvements in coordination and capacity-building with regard to such disasters;

"3. Takes note of the conclusions and proposals made by the Secretary-General in his report with respect to the improvement of early-warning capabilities, better international coordination in their use, and more effective and beneficial exchange of knowledge and technology;

"4. Invites the Secretary-General, in particular, to facilitate, within the existing International Framework of Action for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, 3/ an internationally concerted framework for improvements in early-warning capacities by establishing, using the resources of the Trust Fund for the Decade, an international multisectoral informal mechanism on early warning, under the auspices of the United Nations and as part of the implementation of the Framework and the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action;

"5. Encourages all Governments to undertake, with the full support of the United Nations system, regular reviews of early-warning requirements and capabilities at their national and community levels, within the framework of the development of national disaster reduction policies and as part of their efforts to protect their natural resources and achieve sustainable development;

"6. Calls on the secretariat of the Decade to continue to facilitate a concerted international approach to improvements in early-warning capacities for natural disasters and similar disasters with an adverse impact on the environment, within the process leading towards the closing event of the Decade;

"7. Encourages the utilization of the Trust Fund for the Decade in order to provide and channel adequate resources for the further improvement of such early-warning capacities at the local, national, subregional, regional and international levels;

"8. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session on progress made in the implementation of the present resolution."

6. At the 42nd meeting, on 8 December, the Vice-Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Conor Murphy, introduced a draft resolution entitled "International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction" (A/C.2/50/L.71), submitted on the basis of informal consultations held on dr ft resolution A/C.2/50/L.35, and orally revised the text in operative paragraph 9 by replacing the words "by, inter alia" with the words "including through".

3/ See General Assembly resolution 44/236, annex.

7. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.2/50/L.71, as orally revised, without a vote (see para. 11, draft resolution B).

8. After the adoption of the draft resolution, a statement was made by the representative of Germany (see A/C.2/50/SR.42).

9. In view of the adoption of draft resolution A/C.2/50/L.71, draft resolution A/C.2/50/L.35 was withdrawn by its sponsors.

C. Draft decision

10. At its 42nd meeting, on 8 December, the Committee decided to take note of the report of the Secretary-General concerning the core functions of the secretariat of the Decade submitted pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/47 B (A/50/521) (see para. 12).

III. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SECOND COMMITTEE

11. The Second Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction

DRAFT RESOLUTION A

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions 44/236 of 22 December 1989, 48/188 of 21 December 1993, 49/22 A of 2 December 1994 and 49/22 B of 20 December 1994,

Expressing its solidarity with the people and countries that suffer as a result of natural disasters,

Emphasizing once again the urgent need for concrete measures to reduce the vulnerability of societies to natural hazards, the loss of human lives and the heavy physical and economic damage that occur as a result of natural disasters, in particular in developing countries, small island States and land-locked countries,

Reiterating the validity of the conclusions of the first World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, held at Yokohama, Japan, from 23 to 27 May 1994, in particular with regard to its call for increased bilateral, subregional, regional and multilateral cooperation in the field of disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation, 4/

4/ See A/CONF.172/9, chap. I.

Commending those countries, national and local institutions, organizations and associations that have adopted policies, allocated resources and initiated action programmes, including international assistance, for disaster reduction and, in this context, welcoming the participation of private companies and individuals,

Commending all countries and intergovernmental and regional organizations that have actively engaged in regional and subregional assessments of vulnerability to natural hazards and have consequently initiated regional and subregional cooperation in the field of disaster reduction, including the exchange of data and technology, as well as the development of joint administrative, technological and scientific approaches for applied disaster reduction,

Commending those organizations of the United Nations system and other international organizations, scientific associations and non-governmental organizations which, in accordance with decisions of their governing bodies, have incorporated the recommendations of the General Assembly relating to disaster reduction and those of the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction in their programmes of work, thus contributing towards effective progress in disaster reduction in their mandated responsibilities and respective fields of activity, including the allocation of budgetary resources for disaster reduction,

1. Takes note with appreciation of the report of the Secretary-General 5/ concerning the specific measures for the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness and Mitigation and its Plan of Action, and requests the secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction to continue to promote and monitor their translation into concrete activities, in close cooperation with all bodies comprising the International Framework of Action for the Decade, 6/ so as to ensure timely and effective implementation;

2. Commends those developing and least developed countries that have mobilized domestic resources for disaster reduction activities and have facilitated the effective implementation of such activities, and encourages all developing countries concerned to continue in this direction;

3. Recommends that all countries, with appropriate support, continue to study conventional and non-conventional ways and means of financing disaster reduction measures, both at the national level and with respect to subregional, regional and international technical cooperation;

4. Calls upon Member States, relevant intergovernmental bodies and all others involved in the Decade to participate actively in the financial and technical support of Decade activities, in order to ensure the implementation of the International Framework of Action for the Decade, in particular with a view

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5/ A/50/201-E/1995/74.

6/ See resolution 44/236, annex.

to translating the Yokohama Strategy and the Plan of Action contained therein into concrete disaster reduction programmes and activities;

5. Requests the Commission on Sustainable Development to pay appropriate attention at its fourth session to the issue of disaster reduction when considering the relevant chapters of Agenda 21 7/ and of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States; 8/

6. Welcomes the measures proposed by the Secretary-General to bring the International Framework of Action for the Decade into line with the Yokohama Strategy and its Plan of Action, in order to provide disaster reduction activities worldwide and regionally with authoritative and effective programme guidance so as to ensure stronger cohesion of disaster reduction programmes and the joint participation of concerned sectors in their implementation;

7. Notes the initiative for an informal mechanism between the secretariat of the Decade and Member States, intended to facilitate and support the promotion of Decade activities and the regular exchange of information between Governments, organizations of the United Nations system and other organizations;

8. Welcomes, in pursuance of its resolution 49/22 A, the restructuring of the Special High-Level Council and the Scientific and Technical Committee for the Decade so that for the second half of the Decade they will provide the necessary support to global, regional and national policy and strategy development, public awareness-building and resource mobilization, and at the same time provide links with the scientific community and support the national committees for the Decade and national authorities in their cooperative efforts to integrate disaster reduction programmes into national activities for sustainable development;

9. Endorses the decision of the Secretary-General to extend until the end of the Decade the mandate of the United Nations Steering Committee for the Decade, established in pursuance of General Assembly resolutions 42/169 of 11 December 1987 and 44/236;

10. Emphasizes that effective and efficient coordination and servicing of the above-mentioned components of the International Framework of Action for the Decade require a financially and structurally stable secretariat of the Decade, reporting to the Secretary-General through the Emergency Relief Coordinator;

7/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), resolution 1, annex II.

8/ Report of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, Bridgetown, Barbados, 25 April-6 May 1994 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.94.I.18 and corrigenda), chap. I, resolution I, annex II.

11. Decides, in pursuance of its resolution 49/22 A, to convene a closing event of the Decade, through coordinated sectoral and cross-sectoral meetings at all levels, in order to facilitate the full integration of disaster reduction into the substantive efforts for sustainable development and environmental protection by the year 2000;

12. Decides also that the secretariat of the Decade will serve as the substantive secretariat for the preparation of the closing event of the Decade, working with the full support of relevant bodies of the United Nations Secretariat and drawing on the contributions of the organizations of the United Nations system concerned, other international organizations and Governments;

13. Requests the Secretary-General to ensure the availability of resources for the preparatory process, including the necessary enhancement of the capacity of the secretariat, and to appeal for additional voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund for the Decade;

14. Also requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session, through the Economic and Social Council, a report on the implementation of the International Framework of Action for the Decade;

15. Further requests the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session a report containing proposals on how the distinct programme and coordination capability of the secretariat of the Decade might be enhanced so as to enable it to coordinate effectively the activities of the Decade and the integration of natural disaster reduction into the sustainable development process;

16. Decides to consider the question of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction at its fifty-first session, as a separate sub-item under environmental questions related to the environment and sustainable development.

DRAFT RESOLUTION B

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming its resolutions 44/236 of 22 December 1989, 46/182 of 19 December 1991, 49/22 A of 2 December 1994 and 49/22 B of 20 December 1994,

Taking note of Economic and Social Council resolutions 1995/47 A and B of 27 July 1995,

Concerned about the continued threat posed by natural disasters and similar disasters with an adverse impact on vulnerable communities, including their environments, particularly in developing countries,

Concerned also about the continuing threat posed by natural disasters and similar disasters with an adverse impact on the environment,

Recalling the Yokohama Strategy for a Safer World: Guidelines for Natural Disaster Prevention, Preparedness, and Mitigation and its Plan of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction on 27 May 1994, 9/

Taking into account already existing early-warning capacities within the United Nations system, in particular within the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the Secretariat, the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Meteorological Organization, the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations,

Conscious of the need to avoid duplication of work among United Nations bodies dealing with early-warning capacities,

Emphasizing that early warnings of impending natural disasters and similar disasters with an adverse impact on the environment, linked to effective disaster preparedness measures and their effective dissemination, using, in particular, telecommunications, including broadcast services, are key factors to successful disaster prevention and preparedness,

Reaffirming that sustained economic growth and sustainable development are essential for the prevention of and preparedness for natural disasters and similar disasters with an adverse impact on the environment and that special attention should be given to disaster prevention and preparedness by the Governments concerned as well as by the international community,

1. Takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on early-warning capacities of the United Nations system with regard to natural disasters and similar disasters with an adverse impact on the environment; 10/

2. Commends the secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, as part of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, and all concerned agencies and organizations of the United Nations system for the constructive inter-agency approach they have applied, which has led to this initial overview and analysis of early-warning concepts, capacities and gaps and to proposals for improvements in coordination and capacity-building with regard to such disasters;

3. Requests the Scientific and Technical Committee of the Decade to continue, within the scope of its work on early-warning capabilities, to examine and study new scientific and experimental concepts and methodologies for accurate and timely short-term forecasting of earthquakes, natural disasters and similar disasters with an adverse impact on the environment with a view to making recommendations on their applicability and development in the context of international cooperation to improve preparedness for and minimize the risks of such disasters;

9/ See A/CONF.172/9, chap. I, annex I.

10/ A/50/526.

4. Takes note of the conclusions and proposals made by the Secretary-General in his report with respect to the improvement of early-warning capabilities, better international coordination in their use, and more effective and beneficial exchange of knowledge and technology;

5. Invites the Secretary-General, in particular, to facilitate, within the existing International Framework of Action for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, 11/ an internationally concerted framework for improvements in early-warning capacities by developing a concrete proposal for an effective international mechanism on early warning, to include the transfer of technologies related to early warning to developing countries, under the auspices of the United Nations and as part of the implementation of the International Framework and the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action;

6. Also invites the Secretary-General to take the steps necessary to make the early-warning data gathered under the United Nations auspices readily available to the decision makers concerned at the international, national, regional and subregional levels;

7. Encourages all Governments to undertake, with the full support of the United Nations system, regular reviews of early-warning requirements and capabilities at national and community levels, within the framework of the development of national disaster reduction policies in order to enhance protection of their national populations and assets;

8. Calls on the secretariat of the Decade to continue to facilitate a concerted international approach to improvements in early-warning capacities for natural disasters and similar disasters with an adverse impact on the environment, within the process leading towards the closing event of the Decade;

9. Recommends that donor countries give greater priority to disaster prevention, preparedness and mitigation in their assistance programmes and budgets, on either a bilateral or multilateral basis, including through increasing contributions to the Trust Fund for the Decade, and promote and facilitate the transfer of technologies related to early warning to developing countries within the framework of the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action;

10. Encourages improved efforts, in the context of international technical assistance and cooperation within the framework of the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action, towards facilitating the availability of appropriate technology and reliable data, along with the corresponding training, and access to network systems related to early warning, particularly to developing countries;

11. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session on progress made in the implementation of the present resolution.

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11/ Resolution 44/236, annex.

12. The Second Committee also recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft decision:

Report of the Secretary-General concerning the core functions of the secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction submitted pursuant to Economic and Social resolution 1995/47 B

The General Assembly decides to take note of the report of the Secretary-General concerning the core functions of the secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction submitted pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/47 B. 12/

12/ A/50/521.